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OF

SERMONS

PREACHED BY

HENRY WARD BEECHER.

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HENRY WARD BEECHER.

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WORKING OUT OUR OWN SALVATION.

"Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling: for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."—PHIL. II., 12, 13.

The first question which would naturally suggest itself among men upon this passage, is whether religion is a completed work, imparted by divine power to the human soul, whether it is something finished and made over to men, or whether it is a work which unfolds gradually, an education, differing from others, not so much by its processes and philosophy, as by the higher sphere in which it is taking place.

There have been a great many things taught by stress of controversy in this world, which fell to the ground afterward, by their own weight. There has been a doctrine of *imputed character*, or, as it is more familiarly called, *imputed righteousness*, by a very gross misuse of certain apostolic forms; and men held and taught, in past times (not so much, I think, now), that Christ wrought out a righteousness, and that he conferred it upon those who believed in him; so that it was as something transferred—a substance, a spiritual quality, or a spiritual condition, in its perfection, existing first in him, and then conferred upon others. The illustrative figures frequently employed were those of garments. As our bodies are clothed with dress, so our souls are clothed with the righteousness of Christ.

Such was the figure—for it was but a figure; and on this figure has been founded the substance of a discriminating doctrine dividing between one school of theology and another.

It has been held that some men had sin imputed to them, while other men had moral character imputed to them. By this is meant that one man, being righteous, his righteousness was passed over upon others; and it was said that when they sinned, they were accounted as if they were righteous; that righteousness was imputed

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to them, in the sense that, though they were sinful and imperfect, they were accounted as if they were sinless and righteous before God.

The characters of men in this world, have, on that account, been supposed to be things of divine manufacture; and men's notions were so crude that they supposed these qualities were wrought out in the divine mind, and then transfused in their perfect condition, to the human mind.

When the apostle says,

"Work out your own salvation,"

does he countenance such a notion as this? Does he not, on the contrary, refute it, and show that, whatever may be wrought in man by the divine power, it is something that man has an agency in producing; that it is wrought out of a particular state in his own soul; that it is conferred upon him as a responsible agent?

The reasons which formerly made theologians afraid of human interference, in the work of their own salvation, were twofold. In the first place, it was supposed that it would detract from the glory of God to teach that moral results flow from the indirect effect of the divine will, instead of from the direct effect. And yet, all nature had been teaching the world, if they could but have understood it, that this was the method of the divine action, and that God, who certainly should know what his own glory is, and what will glorify him throughout all nature, is setting causes in operation which shall produce the effects that he desires, he ministering to those causes, and they being made to produce results, and the world being made vital, that it may, according to its own law, and in its own place, bring forth its results in all excellence.

So God does work; and doubtless he counts himself to be glorified by the work which he produces.

A better knowledge of that which science in our day is revealing so clearly, would have saved them from supposing that God would be less honored by producing indirect and instrumental results, than by producing direct and personal and voluntary ones.

But there was another reason why men were afraid of human interference in the work of salvation. It was this: that the old Roman church had been teaching the doctrine that men could lay up for themselves, by good deeds, not only righteousness, but a certain superfluous quantity of it, to be drawn from, as money is drawn from a bank, against the time of need.

The reformers undertook to meet this doctrine of good works, as held in the Roman church; and not discriminating nicely enough, they set their faces emphatically against man's works, and taught

(many of them, at any rate) that men could do nothing in the direction of righteousness, or that the things which they did do in that direction were without virtue; that they had no moral quality in them; and that nothing was of any account except that which God himself taught. They were driven by stress of controversy over upon this extreme ground; and they taught that no man could repent of himself. He must wait for the Spirit of God to bring repentance to him. According to their teaching, no man could change his own heart, or disposition, or life. It must be changed in him by the irresistible power of the divine will. In order to set themselves against the Roman corrupt doctrine of good works, they came near cutting up by the roots the motives of personal endeavor, and individual effort.

This gave rise to a style of preaching which shut men off from activity, and almost produced a state of torpidity. I very well remember the time (and it may be that many of the older members of this congregation remember the same time) when preachers, in urging men to a godly life, cautioned them, at every step, that they should not go too fast nor too far, lest they should, as it were, undo the work of the Spirit. In every exhortation, men were bidden to beware, and wait for the divine influence.

So it came to pass that men waited for God—waited as if in order to have the divine nature put into the human soul, there was nothing to be done by man except to receive it. He was the mighty recipient, and God was the Author absolute. And, as the case of a clock may be imagined to stand waiting for the clock-maker to bring the completed machinery and put into it, and wind it up, the case saying, "What am I? I cannot keep time; I cannot make anything in myself that will keep time; and here I stand; and whenever my owner pleases to put a clock in me I will perform; but I must wait till then"; so men stand and say, "If it is God that works in us to will and to do of his own good pleasure, what can we do? We want to be pardoned, but we cannot pardon ourselves; and we wait for God to pardon us. We want to be built up in a holy character; but if God himself does this work in us, what can we do but wait?" And so men have from year to year stood indolent, waiting for God.

But experience teaches, what is everywhere implied in Scripture, that religion is not a substance separate from the action of man; that it is only another word for character; and that it is *developed* in men—not *imputed to* them. Influences are brought to bear; but the product of those influences is grown out of man.

Character must be developed from pre-existing materials in the human soul.

It is a false mental philosophy which takes any other view than this. And so far from our being commanded to wait for some new quality, or some new attitude, to be infixed in us, we are commanded to work out our own salvable character—that is, that state, that condition, which makes salvation possible in any man; that righteousness, that love, that faith which makes it possible for the human soul to adhere to God.

"Work out your own salvation."

In other words, the whole moral and religious life is put upon the same platform that all the rest of man's life is put upon. Here are the laws; here are the agencies; here are the instrumentalities; and men acknowledge that they are competent to their use in all other directions but those of morality and spirituality; and the word of God teaches that they are just as competent to their use in moral and spiritual directions.

"Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling."

There is nothing in man's physical or intellectual organization; there is nothing in his personal endowments of power for achieving material results, to which there is not a corresponding adaptation in man's spiritual faculties. There is that in his spiritual nature which answers in analogy to the other departments of his being. There is no sphere of human existence which man's natural gifts will not qualify him for if he makes a wise use of them. The divine nature takes for granted, implies, or directly teaches, that there is an adaptation, a preparation, a potency, a will power, an executing force, in a man, by which he can become spiritually, as well as mentally and physically, what God designed he should be in his creation. And to teach anything else is untrue in mental philosophy and in experience.

Like any other education, religious education is gradual. It is the result of time; it is the result of thought; it is the result of successive efforts. It is a growth; and to all growths belongs the element of time. No man ever becomes a perfect Christian suddenly.

You must not misunderstand me, as if I would set aside the doctrine of the divine influence. Nor must you suppose that I would teach you that there is no such thing as a great and sudden change in men's dispositions and tendencies. There is. But it is a change which consummates. It is a change which, affecting a man's purposes, affecting a man's determinations or will, leads step by step to those changes which go to make up character; but no man was ever by conversion brought into a perfect Christian state. In the

case of Paul himself, though he was ordained to be a great and mighty instrument in the hand of God, the work by which he was brought into the kingdom was a work which required years and years and years. And the experiences which he has recorded in his eloquent letters, are experiences wrought out just as years are, little by little, and through long periods.

We are encouraged to work out our salvable state, or our religious character, by the declaration that if we work, we shall have divine help.

We may not state affirmatively, that the great elements of Christian life are wrought out in men little by little. They are never suddenly produced. No man ever, in the spring, saw the orchard, within the space of one hour, clothed with leaves and blossoms and fruit. First comes the swelling bud and the immature leaf; then comes the cluster of leaves; then comes the pink prophecy of a flower; then comes the beautiful cluster of flowers; and then, after the air has been perfumed for some days by the flowers, comes the tiny sign of fruit. And this, fed for weeks and months, and nourished through the whole summer, swells itself out, but still is green, and sour, and unfit for us; and it is only when, at last, the autumn comes with its kindly ripening influences, developing the final flavoring qualities, that it is rich fruit agreeable to the taste. At the beginning it was a germ that had in it all that was developed afterward; but it had none of its substance and reality. That had to be unfolded.

Now, in every single special Christian life, we go through the same process or processes of a far away beginning, and of a constant development or unfolding or ripening toward the final form. For instance, one of the earliest traits that belong to the regenerate character, is an aspiration for righteousness, a desire to be better in thought and in feeling. No man has aspiration in its perfect form in the beginning. At first we desire to correct certain faults. It is not the whole character that we conceive of. Aspiration is occasional. In our better moments, we mourn over transgression. We are ashamed of sin. We make good resolutions. We long, with uplifted hands and uplifted hearts for divine help to overcome easily besetting sins.

These periods are at the beginning comparatively feeble, and at long intervals, that touch but single points in the character. But as we grow from year to year, the aspiration begins to be more symmetrical. It goes through the various stages of the affections and the moral sensibilities, and finally arrives at a complete Christian character. Under the influence of aspiration we long for noble

traits, for higher researches in them, for a larger sphere, and for a more perfect conformity to the divine will; but this is the ultimate, not the beginning, form. We begin a Christian life of aspiration at a low point; and the command is, *Work this out.*

So it is with the trait of obedience. When we first attempt to obey the better law, or the law of love as it is in Christ Jesus, not only are we far from potency, but we are far from understanding. We know very little of what that law is. We have to go through a varied experience to acquaint ourselves with it. This experience is attended with more or less mistakes and errors. Every man studies his lesson-book of obedience as the child at school studies his lesson-book. There are in the way many sufferings, many tears, many poor lessons, many shortcomings, many besetments; but little by little he grows in knowledge and attainment; and each attainment leads subsequently to a stronger desire to make an earnest forthputting for salvation. And this element of growth, or progression by degrees, is invariable. No man is ever born into Christian character so but that obedience to the law of God is a gradual attainment. It is a thing learned.

Did you ever see a musician that was born with the ability to play the organ or any other instrument? You have seen many persons in whom there was an innate musical faculty; but not one that could do anything in music without education and without training.

And so, although we have our spiritual natures, our innate tendencies to things virtuous and good, they are all obliged to conform to this law of education, training, drill. And God says, *Work out your obedience.* As this is the law of our nature, it is the law of God's grace. And he is patient with us. He is long-suffering. He knows, when he undertakes to save a soul, that that soul will not obey from the beginning. When he receives a soul to save it, he receives it as an imperfect soul. He takes every man that he saves knowing that he is weak, and will do wrong. Every soul that he saves, he saves with all these contingencies.

As it is with aspiration and obedience, so it is with love to God—the best of all developments, and the slowest to nature in the soul. A benevolent disposition, a strong spirit of love, which shall temper, modify, and control our nature, which shall spread itself out as a summer of the soul toward those who are around about us, and which shall lift itself up as a sacred atmosphere toward God—this great attainment is never transferred completed from the soul of God to the soul of man. It is that which we work for, and which, working for it, we miss often and often and often. But little by

little we gain it. Little by little the horizon grows large. Little by little the sun shines brighter to our eye. No man ever yet learned to love God with all his heart, and his neighbor as himself, in a day—nay, nor in a life-time; for that is a lesson which is forever being learned, and is never completed on these mortal shores.

So it is with sympathy toward men; so it is with humility; so it is with meekness; so it is with gentleness; so it is with patience; so it is with every single one of those Christian traits which are so frequently registered in the Word of God. No man, because he is just awakened, and converted, and rejoices in God's forgiving love, and is brought into the church, should suppose that he has all these things set in him, and ready for perfect action.

The apostle says that *we are God's husbandry.* Our souls are his farms. And when God begins his work in your soul, and seeks for humility, and meekness, and love, he says to you, "Work out these traits. Plow for them. Sow seed for them. And when they come up, cultivate them. And when they are ripe, garner and harvest them." Every one of these traits is to be made subject matter of careful thought, much prayer, much endeavor, much skillful education. And that is the interpretation, to a large extent, of the divine providences which are coöperating with grace, and are giving men opportunity to develop these traits.

How shall men learn to be patient, if everything is just as they want it? How shall men learn perseverance, if they have everything without endeavor? When men are crossed, when their plans are subverted, when they find the world bearing heavily upon their shoulders, God is saying to them, "Work out patience; work out perseverance; work out courage." When men find that pride dominates in them, and that by pride they are led into trifling, and into fault-finding, and perhaps into interrogating God, saying, "Why am I thus dealt with, O my Father?" God is saying, "Work out humility; work out gentleness." Are circumstances depressed? Is home scowling and cloudy? Is life obstructed? Do you from day to day find yourself kicking against the pricks? The providence of God is saying, "Work out, by these helps, your own salvation." Educate yourself in those moral traits which, if you bear up manfully, and act the part of a Christian, under such circumstances, cannot fail to be developed and established in you.

But we are commanded in working out our own salvation, to develop in ourselves those traits of character which shall make us like Christ, and make it possible for Christ to be companionable with us, and to save us throughout all eternity. We are commanded to do this *with fear and trembling.*

Is it, then, that our God is capricious? Is it that we are like

courtiers in an Eastern despotism, who are liable to be supplanted, and are suspicious of each other all the time? Is our God one that inspires fear? No. What is meant by *fear and trembling* is the antithesis of conceit. It is the antithesis of that contentment which springs from overweening confidence or indifference. If men think they are so nearly good that they do not need to be anxious, the word of the Lord to them is, "Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? there is more hope of a fool than of him;" but if a man, on the other hand, has such a sense of his real deficiency, that he feels the need of education in divine things; if he says, "The work is so great that it can only be accomplished by the putting forth of every endeavor, then there will be that *fear and trembling* of which the text speaks—that natural insight, that alertness, that earnest circumspection, which every man has who addresses himself to a thing which is valued, and which stands in distinction from that atonement which a man has who thinks he is well enough off.

At any rate, bring to this work that earnestness which men bring to things which they desire and mean to have in secular life. There is nothing in this world which requires more spirit, more purpose, more watching, than this work. There is no more various culture than that which is derived from seeking those great ends which are set before every one in a Christian life. We cannot afford to be indifferent Christians. We cannot make progress in Christian life, if we live in a state of supine indifference. We are to work out our own salvation as earnest men work, thinking before, thinking after, full of resources, full of desires, as men are when they are searching for things which their whole heart is set upon.

It is not, then, servile fear and trembling, but generous, manly, courageous, wholesome fear and trembling, which come from the best feelings, acting in the best directions, and inspired by the best influences, that we are called upon to be actuated by in working out our salvation. And surely the apostle teaches us that every man needs to work out his own salvation with fear and trembling—that is to say, with unceasing vigilance, with untiring watchfulness. So many are the things which obscure the mind; so many are the things which tone down a man's purpose; so many are the diversions which load the soul with care, and obstruct a man's purpose; so many are the diversions which lead a man from the goal toward which he is aiming, that no man can succeed in maintaining a religious life except at the price of continual thought, and continual faith, and continual determination, and continual dependence upon the grace of God.

This brings us to the last thought; namely, that all our work to secure our own salvation would be most hopeless, if we should work

unaided. There must be this spring, this courage, this perseverance, this motive-power on our part; and yet, these high and noble ambitions will be in vain unless God works with us. For it is God that inspires us to this life. *It is God that works in us to will and to do of his good pleasure.*

It is not to supersede, but to incite and to guide, every human faculty, that the spirit of God is given. It is quite a vain question whether a man might, by himself, by the natural force of his faculties, gain everything that he desires. That which is most to the point is, that there is in the universe a provision by which men are helped. Grace reveals it. But it is not a provision which helps men who do not desire to rise above the ordinary physical conditions of life, above the vulgar conditions of society, above the natural and selfish state in which man finds himself.

Men sometimes think that the way of grace is a hard way, and that the whole economy of this life is in favor of the ungracious and unregenerate state. Men think that the whole retinue of influences in society fight against grace in the soul. And to a certain extent they do. But forever running through nature, through providence, through human life, there is the mind and thought and heart of God brooding upon all human hearts, and working in them "to will and to do of his good pleasure." There is not a soul that does not feel drawn by the divine brooding soul, though it may not know from whence the power comes which draws it. Men have inspirations from God which they cannot account for. Strong influences, drawing even bad men, and leading them to do good things while they are in a state of nature, are from the Spirit of God, that spreads itself abroad through the earth, even as the sun; that strives with those who know, and those who do not know what it is; that strives, I believe, with those who do not know the Gospel; that works with the heathen; that ministers to the Gentiles; that sheds the light of truth upon those who shall never see more than the twilight in this world. This great Father-Spirit, this great loving Spirit, this life-giving Spirit, is universal. The earth, from horizon to horizon, is filled with it. And there is no place where a soul can be that to it is not conjoined the influences of the Divine Spirit. Attempt anything, overcome anything, attain anything, you are not alone. You are not simply left to your endeavors. God works in you. And there is the promise of success.

It has been said, "If it is God that works, how shall it be man also?" Suppose we should have a reasoning organ; and suppose that organ should say to Beethoven, who was sitting down before the keyboards, "Now, either you will play, or I will; but how can you

and I play together?" "How can we do anything else?" Beethoven says. The organ performs according to his touches on the keys; but if there were no organ, his thoughts would lack expression. The thinking mind of the artist expresses itself through the help of the instrument. And so those noble symphonies flow out which entrance the world. The apostle says:

"Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God which worketh in you."

And philosophy says, "If it is God that works in man, how does man work?" Is there no such thing as coöperation? Is there no such thing as inspiration?

When the child is working, and the mother stands at the door and says, "Bravely done, my child!" is there no new light in the eye? is there no alacrity added to the hand? is there no ambition excited to do yet better? Does not the mother work in the child to will and to do the things which the child cannot do of itself?

In the midst of battle, men who have unflinchingly borne until they are well-nigh cut off, are thinking of retreat; and they hear the voice of their captain crying out to them, and sending a thrill through the air. The result is that they nerve themselves up once more, and victory comes with this last effort. There is success when another mighty soul is working in them, inspiring them to will and to do.

A wandering, weary, spent, hungry traveler sits down, benumbed, to give up in despair. He is met by a hunter. But is his weariness cured? Is the cold dissipated? Is his hunger satisfied? No. But the hunter says to him, "Be a man. Rouse up what is in you. Follow me. And now you shall not wander in a circle, and in vain I know the way; and if you will make a few more efforts you will be safe." The hunter works in the man to will and to do for his own salvation. He brings him out of danger.

Men are in a thousand ways thrown into circumstances in which another man can develop force in them. And blessed be God, there is a Spirit which works within us, and develops a power in us which teaches us how to accomplish what we will, and guides us by its inspiration to successful results. This is the whole hope of Christian life which is left to us. They who fall back into somnolency and pride and selfishness are without its comfort; but we who wake up to a sense of our privileges, and avail ourselves of this proffered help, are under the administration of a Father who loves us better than we love ourselves, and who is working intelligence and inspiration and purposes in us, and leading us on step by step; and it will by and by complete in us this glorious work of emancipation from sin, this grand establishment of a righteous character, and bring us

into the fullness of his power and love, and into the joy and victory of the upper kingdom.

And now I say, Christian brethren, in the language of the apostle, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his own good pleasure."

God will help you. Try higher flights—God will help you. Try more difficult things—God will help you. Do not be afraid to venture into any path of Christian life. Count yourselves unworthy of nothing. Aim at the best and highest things—it is God that is helping you.

And to those who have stood wistfully looking at the Christian life, wandering hither and thither, not knowing where to go, and fearing to join the people of God lest they should bring reproach upon the church of Christ, I say, Venture, O timid souls! enter upon a Christian life. Commit your souls to God. Cling to Him to whom you are dearer than any babe to its mother. The heart of God knows how to love as the heart of no human being knows how to love. Men are dear to God; and he says to those who come to him, "I will in no wise cast you out, but will give you eternal life.

Venture upon God. Enter upon the Christian life. Enlarge your conceptions, your ambitions, your aspirations. Seek to enter into the kingdom of God. And remember that it is God who leads you to that living Spirit which shall help you in working out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for *it is God that worketh in you to will and to do of his good pleasure.*

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

We draw near to thee, this evening, not as to one strange, or reluctant to grant mercy; for thou art more willing to grant good gifts to us, our Father, than we are willing to grant good gifts to our children. Thou art more solicitous to bless us than we are to be blessed of thee; and thy love toward us is greater and wiser and more full of mercy than our own love of ourselves. And we draw near to thee as our Shelter, our Refuge, our Hope, our Life. All that we have is of thee. In thee we live, and move, and have our being. Thou art filling with thy presence all things. Wherever is life, is God. Wherever is law, thy will is known. Wherever things are accomplishing beneficent ends, there is thy wisdom. Thou art felt throughout all thy boundless domain; and things praise thee in heaven and upon the earth. Oh, that our hearts were attuned to this universal rejoicing, and that we might be delivered from sin, and so brought into sympathy with thee, that our hearts should evermore praise thee, and rejoice in thy work!

We beseech of thee that thou wilt grant unto us, to-night, such access as children have. May we come here, bringing the confession of our sins. Open our hearts freely before God. Look thou upon us, and see altogether what is in us. Heal that which is sick; forgive that which is amiss; strengthen that which is weak; guide that which is erring; and inspire us, in all parts of our souls, with an earnest desire to live so as to please thee here, and to inherit and enjoy thee hereafter.

We beseech of thee that thou wilt grant the enlivening influence of thy Spirit upon the word of truth. May it be spoken with sincerity and simplicity; and may it have in it nourishment for those who shall hear.

We pray that thy Churches may abound with thy Spirit. May those who make known the unsearchable riches of Christ to-night be blessed of God. May their words not fall to the ground useless. As seed that falls upon good ground, may they bring forth an hundred fold.

We pray that thy blessing may rest upon all the efforts made by thy people everywhere for the reformation of morals, and for the establishment of righteousness.

We pray for the purification of our laws, and our magistracy. We pray for the vindication of justice throughout this great land. Thou hast indeed made this country eminent by thy benefactions. Thou art causing it to grow in strength and in riches. Deliver us from selfishness, and from avarice, and from covetousness, and from infidelity. Deliver us from all cruelty, and all desire to despoil the weak. May we long to have this land consecrated to truth and justice and humanity.

And be thou, O God, with the counselors of the nation. Guide our rulers. Grant that they may be God-following men, and that they may walk in the fulfillment of thy will.

And we pray that thou wilt spread the knowledge of truth over all the sea, and through all the continents. Everywhere may there be a turning unto the Lord. Oh, that the long lingering days of darkness might flee away! Oh, that the bright days of prediction which shall bring peace and songs might come! Oh, for the day when the earth shall not groan and travail in pain! Oh, for the universal diffusion of holiness, when peace and prosperity shall settle down in all our borders, and no man shall have occasion to say to his neighbor, Know ye the Lord? for they shall all know him, from the least unto the greatest! May we in our place, and according to the measure of our strength, labor for this blessed consummation, evermore saying, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

And now, Lord, we beseech of thee that thou wilt grant us thy blessing,

not according to our feeble petition, not according to the wisdom with which we make our request, but according to the greatness of thy mercy. In thee we desire evermore to find the measure of benefaction. We desire that thou wilt take counsel with thine own heart. Bless us not as we deserve, but as thine infinite love and kindness prompt thee. Manifest thy tender mercy and long-suffering goodness toward us in days to come, as thou hast in days that are past.

And when, at last, we shall have passed through light, and through darkness, and through trouble and sorrow, and through sin and repentance, and through all the phases of life, bring us, with all thy people, to that rest which remaineth for the people of God. And to the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, shall be praise evermore. *Amen.*

PRAYER AFTER THE SERMON.

Our Father, accept our thanks for the cheer and comfort of thy Word. How art thou to us like a Father when we hear that Word! When we listen to the philosophies of men, thou seemest to go away, and art afar off, and art hid behind thy glory. And we call and no one answers; and we stretch out our hand, and no one takes it. But when we come unto thy word, or hear it spoken, how gentle art thou! how near thou art! how full of sympathy art thou! how art thou unto men as a father is to his children.

We thank thee for all these revelations of our God to us. We rejoice that heaven is full of this sympathizing God. We rejoice that the earth and all the courses of nature are filled full of the might and power of this God of love. Thou that didst suffer that men might not suffer; thou that didst give thy life that life might be brought to all thy creatures; thou that art long-suffering, and art working with nature, with all the forces of heaven and earth for our good, remember evermore the weak and the needy.

Oh, grant that to a conception of thy glory men's eyes may be opened, and men's hearts enlarged, and that men may be led to take hold of thee, and to feel thy power taking hold of them!

And now, we beseech of thee that thou wilt bless the word of truth spoken this night. May it sink down into the heart, and do good, bringing forth an hundred fold. We ask it for Christ's sake. *Amen.*

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